

## Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ARAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BRASILIA 11073

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ECON, SGEN, PFOR, BR

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT GEISEL'S YEAR-END ADDRESS TO THE NATION

1. SUMMARY. EVIDENTLY INTENDED TO COUNTER PERVERSIVE PESSIMISM  
ABOUT THE OUTLOOK FOR 1976 AND GROWING CRITICISM OF THE  
GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES, PRESIDENT GEISEL'S YEAR-END ADDRESS TO THE  
NATION STRESSED THE REASONS FOR ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES IN 1975,  
THE MODEST BUT NOT ALARMING PROSPECTS FOR THE ECONOMY IN 1976,  
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AND THE SOCIAL AND FOREIGN POLICY

ADVANCES MADE IN 1975. GEISEL BLAMED THE INTERNATIONAL RECESSION AND BAD WEATHER FOR MUCH OF THE ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES, EMPHASIZED THE PRIORITIES OF EXPORTS, IMPORT SUBSTITUTION, AND EXPANSION OF THE DOMESTIC MARKET, DEFENDED PETROLEUM RISK CONTRACTS AND THE DRASIC IMPORT RESTRICTIONS, AND SAID GNP GROWTH WOULD EXCEED POPULATION GROWTH IN 1975. GEISEL REMARKED THAT 1976 WOULD BE A DIFFICULT YEAR BUT IT WOULD NOT BRING RECESSION OR ABNORMAL UNEMPLOYMENT. ON SOCIAL POLICY, GEISEL POINTED TO MEASURES TO LOWER THE COST OF HOUSING AND TO UNIVERSALIZE SOCIAL BENEFITS. ON THE POLITICAL FRONT, GEISEL PRAISED BETTER EXECUTIVE-CONGRESSIONAL COOPERATION IN 1975, AND CITED SOME POLITICAL-ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS. TURNING LAST TO FOREIGN POLICY, GEISEL APPLAUSED THE NUCLEAR AGREEMENT WITH WEST GERMANY, AND POINTED TO STEPS TAKEN TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBORS AND WITH PORTUGUESE-SPEAKING AFRICAN NATIONS. GEISEL'S SPEECH CONTAINED NO NEW IDEAS. HIS GUARDED OPTIMISM, EVEN THOUGH SOMEWHAT FORCED IN ORDER, APPARENTLY, TO COMBAT PESSIMISM ABOUT THE ECONOMY, SEEMS ABOUT RIGHT. (MANY OBSERVERS BELIEVE HOWEVER, THE RECENT IMPORT RESTRICTIONS WILL LEAD TO AN ECONOMIC SLOWDOWN.) STRIKING IS THE ABSENCE OF SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL COMMENT, ALTHOUGH THE SPEECH WAS HIGHLY POLITICAL IN THE SENSE OF REMINDING THE ELECTORATE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS. END SUMMARY.

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2. IN HIS YEAR-END ADDRESS TO THE NATION ON DEC. 39, PRESIDENT GEISEL DREW A DETERMINEDLY BUT STILL CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC PICTURE OF THE ECONOMIC SITUATION AND THE CHALLENGES AHEAD IN 1976, AND HE POINTED TO ADVANCES MADE THIS YEAR IN SOCIAL AND FOREIGN POLICY AND IN EXECUTIVE-CONGRESSIONAL COOPERATION. HE BEGAN BY SAYING THAT 1975 WAS NOT AN EASY YEAR FOR BRAZIL, NOR FOR OTHER COUNTRIES. HE SAID THE INTERNATIONAL RECESSION SEVERELY RESTRICTED BRAZILIAN EXPORTS AND HURT ITS TERMS-OF-TRADE. INTERNALLY, UNFORSEEN CLIMATIC CALAMITIES DASHED HOPES FOR ABUNDANT CROPS (AND EXPORTS), HAD GRAVE SOCIAL REPERCUSSIONS ON THE FARM POPULATION AFFECTED, AND GAVE RISE TO AN ONEROUS TRADE DEFICIT.

3. GEISEL POINTED TO THE NEED TO ACT WITH FLEXIBILITY IN THESE DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES, KEEPING IN MIND OBJECTIVES  
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OF GROWTH, BALANCE-OF-PAYMENTS (BOP) EQUILIBRIUM, INFLATION, AND INCOME-REDISTRIBUTION. HE SAID THE SECOND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (PND-2) HAD BEEN CONCEIVED WITH A REALIZATION THAT THE ECONOMIC CLIMATE WOULD BE INSECURE AND INCREASINGLY UNCERTAIN. FOR THIS REASON PND-2 DID NOT CONTAIN RIGID GOALS BUT RATHER IT ESTABLISHED A PLANNING SYSTEM ADAPTABLE TO ECONOMIC REALITIES. THE BASIC OBJECTIVE OF PND-2 WAS TO OBTAIN THE HIGHEST GROWTH POSSIBLE IN A MARKET

ECONOMY WHILE GUARDING AGAINST STAGNATION OR RECESSION, WHICH IS NOW AFFLICTING THE DC'S. TO THIS END, THE GOB ADOPTED MEASURES AT THE BEGINNING OF 1975 TO INCREASE EXPORTS AND PROGRESSIVELY TO CONTAIN IMPORTS. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT EXPORTS GREW LESS THAN EXPECTED, BUT IMPORTS DID BETTER-- THEY DID NOT INCREASE IN VOLUME OR VALUE IN 1975.

4. TURNING TO THE GOB'S ECONOMIC POLICIES, GEISEL POINTED TO THE SUBSTANTIAL EFFORT TO SUBSTITUTE IMPORTS, A TRADITIONAL STEP IN TIMES OF BOP DIFFICULTIES, AND TO THE RECENT "EVEN MORE DRASTIC" MEASURES TO CONTAIN IMPORTS. HE SAID IMPORT SUBSTITUTION IN SECTORS CHARACTERIZED BY HIGH TECHNOLOGY AND LARGE INVESTMENTS, PARTICULARLY CAPITAL GOODS AND BASIC INPUTS, WOULD BE GIVEN ALL THE RESOURCES AND INCENTIVES NEEDED, WITH PREFERENE TO PRIVATE ENTERPRISE. IN THE MOST CRITICAL PETROLEUM FIELD, ACCORDING TO GEISEL, THE GOB HAD AUTHORIZED RISK CONTRACTS AND A COMPLEMENTARY PROGRAM TO EXPAND ALCOHOL PRODUCTION. HE POINTED TO OTHER STEPS TO IMPLEMENT PND-2 PRIORITIES, INCLUDING EXPORT PROMOTION AND EMPHASIS ON NEW "MOTOR CENTERS" OF THE ECONOMY. THE GOB RESISTED "PREMATURE REACTION OF PANIC," GEISEL SAID, AND ADOPTED "ONLY NOW" DRASTIC IMPORT MEASURES IN ORDER TO IMPROVE THE BOP NEXT YEAR AND TO PERMINT BRAZIL TO MAINTAIN ITS FOREIGN EXCHANGE RESERVES. THE GLIMMERS OF GREATER SECURITY IN THE WORLD ECONOMY, ACCORDING TO GEISEL, HAVE KINDLED CONFIDENCE AND HOPE THAT THE IMPORT MEASURES WILL BE LESS PROLONGED AND CERTAINLY LESS STRONG.

5. CONSIDERING NEXT THE PERFORMANCE OF THE ECONOMY IN 1975 AND THE OUTLOOK FOR 1976, GEISEL MADE TWO MAJOR POINTS: (A) GNP GROWTH IN 1975 EXCEEDED POPULATION GROWTH (GOB SOURCES USUALLY CLAIM POPULATION GROWTH OF ABOUT 2.8 PERCENT PER YEAR), AND (B) 1976 WILL BE A DIFFICULT YEAR BUT IT WILL NOT BRING A RECESSION. GEISEL NOTED THAT 1975 GNP GROWTH WOULD MEAN AN INCREASE IN PER CAPITA INCOME, AND THAT IN-  
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FATION IS DECLINING ALTHOUGH BY A SMALL AMOUNT. GEISEL SAID THERE WAS NO RECESSION OR ABNORMAL UNEMPLOYMENT IN 1975, AND HE OFFERED ASSURANCE OF A CLIMAT OF TRANQUILITY AND PROGRESS IN BRAZIL EVEN THOUGH "UNEMPLOYMENT LINES ABROAD ARE PARALYZING FACTORIS AND SERVICES." REGARDING THE REPERCUSSIONS OF THE IMPORT MEASURES, GEISEL PROMISED GOVERNMENT ATTENTIVENESS AND STIMULUS TO CERTAIN SECTORS, INCLUDING ENGINEERING AND CIVIL CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS AND OTHER SECTORS THAT ARE LABOR INENSIVE, THAT DEPEND LITTLE ON IMPORTED INPUTS, AND THAT OFFER GOOD EXPORT POSSIBILITIES. HE SAID THE MONIES MADE AVAILABLE TO THE GOB THROUGH IMPORT DEPOSIT PAYMENTS WOULD BE USED TO EXPAND SELECTIVE LINES OF CREDIT, TO BENEFIT ESPECIALLY SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZE FIRMS THAT NEED WORKING CAPITAL, AND AGRICULTURE AND LIVE-STOCK. TURING TO 1976, GEISEL SAID THAT BRAZIL IS CAPABLE

OF (TEM CONDICOES) MEETING THE DIFFICULTIES AHEAD AND EVEN OF ACHIEVING SIGNIFICANT ECONOMIC GROWTH. HE EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT BRAZIL WOULD NOT EXPERIENCE "RECESSION, DEPRESSION, OR ZERO GROWTH."

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BYM GEISEL ASSURED THAT BRAZIL WOULD MEET THE TASK AHEAD WITH DETERMINATION AND EQUILIBRIUM, AND WITHIN AN OUTLOOK OF HUMANISM, DEVELOPMENT, AND IMPROVEMENT OF LIVING CONDITIONS ESPECIALLY FOR THE POOR. HE REAFFIRMED THE PRINCIPLE OF "SOUND ECONOMIC PRAGMATISM," AND THE POTENTIAL FOR INCREASING

INTERNAL DEMAND AND PRODUCTION IN PRIORITY SECTORS.  
IN CLOSING THE ECONOMIC PORTION OF HIS ADDRESS, HE PLEDGED  
THE GOB'S FULL ATTENTION TO THE ECONOMIC PROBLEM.

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7. IN REVIEWING HIS ADMINISTRATION'S ACCOMPLISMENTS IN THE SOCIAL SECTOR, GEISEL FIRST CITED THE COMPLETE REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL HOUSING BANK'S (BNH) PROGRAM WHICH RESULTED IN A SERIES OF MEASURES DESIGNED TO RELIEVE THE ONEROUS EFFECTS OF INFLATION ON LOWER INCOME FAMILIES WITH BNH LOANS; HE SPECIFICALLY REFERRED TO THE 50 PERCENT MONETARY CORRECTION BENEFIT RECENTLY EXTENDED TO QUALIFIED BORROWERS. GEISEL THEN DESCRIBED THE CREATION OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL WELFARE AND ASSISTANCE AND THE COUNCIL OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AS CLEAR INDICATORS OF THE "SPECIAL INTEREST" HIS GOVERNMENT ATTRIBUTES TO THIS AREA. OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS BRIEFLY NOTED INCLUDED THE EXTENSION OF INPS (SOCIAL SECURITY) BENEFITS TO QUALIFIED INVALIDS AND AGED PERSONS; THE ASSUMPTION BY THE GOVERNMENT OF PAYMENT OF MATERNITY BENEFITS; BETTER COORDINATION AMONG THE VARIOUS SOCIAL WELFARE ORGANS (THANKS HE NOTED POINTEDLY, TO AN ARENA-SPONSORED LAW); THE EXTENSION OF MEDICAL SERVICES IN CERTAIN DENSELY POPULATED AREAS; GREATER FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR ELEMENTARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION; AND VARIOUS MEASURES (UNSPECIFIED) FOR IMPROVING JOB SAFETY. ALL OF THE ABOVE, REPEATED THE PRESIDENT, DEMONSTRATED THE "HIGHEST IMPORTANCE" HIS ADMINISTRATION GIVES TO THE SOCIAL SECTOR.

8. "WITH REGARD TO POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT," GEISEL SAID, "I SHOULD REFER ESPECIALLY TO THE CLIMATE OF EFFECTIVE COOPERATION EXISTING BETWEEN THE EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE (BRANCHES), THE FORMER MANAGING TO OBTAIN FROM THE LATTER PROMPT ATTENTION TO HIS REQUESTS FOR APPROVAL OF PROJECTS, WHICH HAD, IN INNUMERABLE CASES, VALUABLE INPUT FROM CONGRESSMEN. SUCH A HIGHLY SALUTARY RELATIONSHIP," HE CONTINUED, "SEEMS TO ME A FOUNDATION INDISPENSABLE TO ANY EFFECTIVE ADVANCE WHICH IT MIGHT BE DESIRED TO CARRY OUT IN THE DIRECTION OF THE NATIONAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT WHICH WE ALL SINCERELY WISH FOR." AS POLITICO-ADMINISTRATIVE HIGHLIGHTS, GEISEL CITED THE LAW PROVIDING GREATER INCOME FOR STATES AND MUNICIPALITIES, THE LAW EXTENDING SALARIES TO CITY COUNCILMEN, AND THE "EFFECTIVE IMPLANTATION" OF NEW RIO STATE.

9. ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, GEISEL REAFFIRMED POLICY OF "RESPONSIBLE PRAGMATISM", AND AS "SOME OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS"  
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OF 1975 MENTIONED: (1) THE NUCLEAR ACCORD WITH GERMANY, WHICH "MARKED, FOR THE BRAZILIAN ECONOMY, THE THRESHOLD OF A NEW ERA, AND ON THE WORLD SCENE SHOWED THE DETERMINATION AND MATURITY WITH WHICH BRAZIL KNOWS HOW TO CONDUCT ITSELF IN THE DEFENSE OF NATIONAL INTERESTS, IMMUNE TO IMPROPER PRESSURES;" (2) HIS TRIP TO ASUNCION AND SIGNING THERE OF A TREATY WHICH MARKS A "NEW STAGE" IN RELATIONS WITH PARAGUAY, "JUST LIKE THOSE PREVIOUSLY SIGNED IN COCHABAMBA WITH BOLIVIA (AND) IN RIVERA WITH URUGUAY;" AND (3) CLOSER TIES WITH AFRICAN COUNTRIES. "SPECIAL SUCCESS SHOULD BE CREDITED TO THE POLICY OF APPROXIMATION WITH THE NEW PORTUGUESE-SPEAKING NATIONS, IN THE CONTEXT OF WHICH, FAITHFUL TO THE PRINCIPLES OF NON-INTERVENTION AND RESPECT FOR THE SELF-DETERMINATION OF PEOPLES, BRAZIL ESTABLISHED DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH ALL THE STATES ARISING FROM PORTUGAL'S OLD COLONIES."

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10. COMMENT. SLIGHTLY DULL IN DELIVERY, THE ADDRESS CONTAINED NO NEW IDEAS OR BOLD PROPOSALS. IN CONTRAST TO THE PRESIDENT'S SEPTEMBER ADDRESS, THE LATEST EFFORT DID NOT SEEM TO CONVEY A FULLY CONVINCING PICTURE OF A GOVERNMENT THAT HAS COME TO GRIPS SURELY AND IMAGINATIVELY WITH THE DIFFICULTIES THAT SEEM TO HAVE SAPPED THE CONFIDENCE OF MANY BRAZILIANS OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS. ONE INDICATION OF THIS TREND IS ILLUSTRATED BY A GALLUP POLL RELEASED ON DEC 31 SHOWING THAT PESSIMISM ABOUT THE ECONOMY OF RESPONDENTS IN RIO AND SAO PAULO IS AT AN ALL TIME HIGH SINCE 1967.

11. ON THE ECONOMIC SIDE, GEISEL'S DESCRIPTION OF THE ECONOMIC OUTLOOK, ALTHOUGH WEIGHTED SOMEWHAT ON THE OPTIMISTIC SIDE SEEMS TO EXPRESS A REASONABLE MEASURE OF CAUTION, HOPE, AND EXPECTATION OF BELT-TIGHTENING NEEDED TO OVERCOME PRESENT DIFFICULTIES. MANY OBSERVERS EXPECT THAT THE "DRASTIC" IMPORT MEASURES WILL LEAD TO AN ECONOMIC SLOWDOWN IF NOT A RECESSION, DESPITE GEISEL'S ASSURANCES.

HIS RELATIVELY SOBER ASSESSMENT OF THE PROSPECTS FOR 1976 CONTRASTS WITH FINANCE MINISTER SIMONSEN'S PREDICTION TWO DAYS EARLIER OF A "BETTER-THAN-EXPECTED YEAR" IN 1976. WE

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BELIEVE GEISEL'S STATEMENT TO BE CLOSER TO THE MARK. THE GEISEL GOVERNMENT'S INITIATIVES ON SOCIAL POLICY HAVE BEEN SIGNIFICANT, AND, WE BELIEVE, WELL-RECEIVED. IT SEEMS TO US THAT GEISEL HOPES THE POPULARITY OF THE SOCIAL INTIATIVES

WILL HELP OFFSET THE ELECTORATE'S DISSATISFACTION WITH THE ECONOMY.

12. STRIKING IS THE ABSENCE IN THE SPEECH OF SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL COMMENT. DESPITE POLITICAL CIRCLES' EARLY HOPES FOR AN AUTHORITATIVE WORD, GEISEL MADE NO REFERENCE TO ANY OF THE ISSUES CURRENTLY ON PEOPLES MINDS, E.G., POSSIBLE CABINET SHUFFLE, A POSSIBLE ALTERATION IN ELECTION SCHEDULE AND/OR RULES, AND THE GENERAL ISSUE OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT VERSUS IMMOBILITY. THE REFERENCE TO "NATIONAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT WHICH WE ALL SINCERELY WISH FOR" WE CONSIDER TOO BLAND, SOLITARY AND VAGUE TO BE OF ANY ANALYTICAL SIGNIFICANCE. OVERALL, OF COURSE, WITH ITS STRESS ON THE GOVERNMENT'S COMPETENCE AND FORESIGHT THAT HAVE BROUGHT BENEFITS TO PEOPLE, THE SPEECH IS HIGHLY POLITICAL IN AN ELECTORAL SENSE--AND (DESPITE SOME FACTUAL BASIS) NOT ENTIRELY CONVINCING.

13. THE CLAIM OF "SPECIAL SUCCESS"FOR POLICY OF APPROXIMATION WITH FORMER PORTUGUESE TERRITORIES IN AFRICA IS ALREADY BEING INTERPRETED BY SOME HERE AS SUPPORT FOR FONMIN SILVEIRA IN HIS ONGOING BATTLE WITH O ESTADO DE SAO PAULO AND OTHER WHO HAVE CHARGED THAT THE GOB MOVED PRECIPITATELY AND MISTAKENLY IN RECOGNIZING THE SOVIET-BACKED MPLA IN ANGOLA. END CONFIDENTIAL  
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